

## INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES' STRIKE ON STUDENTS' LEARNING IN AMBROSE ALLI UNIVERSITY, EKPOMA

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### Abstract

*The study investigated the influence of Academic Staff Union of Universities' (ASUU) strike on students' learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (AAUE) using descriptive survey design. The study specifically determined the influence of (ASUU) strike on students' learning in AAUE. A research question was raised and answered in this study. One hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. A sample of 250 out of 4,987 undergraduates was used for the study. A questionnaire was used to gather data for the study. It was accorded content validation. The reliability of the questionnaire was carried out through split-half method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used to determine the co-efficient and .78 of 'r' value was obtained which was high enough for the study. 250 questionnaires were duly filled and collated for data analysis. A t-test was used to test the hypothesis at .05 level of significance. Result revealed that academic staff union of universities' strike has a significant influence on students' learning in AAUE. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that ASUU strike has a significant influence on students' learning in AAUE. The study confirmed that strike action destabilized calendar of universities education in Nigeria. The disruption affects the followings: curriculum implementation, quality of lesson delivery, period of graduation, hampered students' performance and quality of education in the country. Based on the findings, the study recommended that ASUU members in Public Universities should adopt Productive Dialogue rather than the use of strikes to resolve issues with Governments.*

**Keywords:** *Strike, Students' Learning Process, Public Universities, Academic Staff Union of Universities*

### Introduction

Education is undoubtedly the greatest instrument which man has devised for his own progress. It is a prominent tool for societal reconstruction, transformation, growth, sustainable development and the maintenance of good life. However, the dispute between Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Government has in one way or the other affected the goal of Education in Nigeria for over three decades. The persistent ASUU strikes in Nigeria have disrupted school academic activities, left academic activities of universities disjointed, and distract the normal learning process (Kazeem & Ige, 2015). Olusegun (2019) maintained that instability in school calendar through strike elongate study period and hamper their academic activities.

Despite the importance of stability on school calendar on education, the incessant ASUU strikes action in the country has become worrisome and destabilized the programme of educational sector. Disruptions in academic programmes serve as non-motivational factor to the students. It discourages them from learning.

Odubela, (2017) asserted that an effective learning or an enhanced academic performance is achieved by the successful covering of the course outline before the examination. Maliki and Ekpekin-Ekanem (2016) opined that quality and quantity of students' learning is determined by individual study habit. During strike actions, some students may engage themselves in unproductive activities such as sexual immorality, cyber scam, pool betting, playing video games, gossips, watching films and reading comic materials for entertainment purposes rather than reading the school notes. These may affect their academic performance.

Erasmus (2022) also stated that these strike actions always lead to disruption of academic programme which may expose students to disjointed learning and it may encourage poor study habit among students. Arukaino (2013) argued that the idling youths at home could cause security problems. Isangedighi (2016) opined that the way a stimulus excites or influences on an individual would trigger his/her responses. These are an indication that students may lose the skill for preparedness and readiness to learn at the time of the strike. Hence their educational attainment becomes adversely affected.

Odubela (2017) also observed that disruption in academic programme occasioned by strike action breeds disappointment, frustration, emotional and psychological trauma, unpreparedness on the part of the students and lack of motivation, which sum up to a non-conducive environment for active learning in Nigerian Universities, a situation that dampens human development. However, much attention has not been given to the strike actions on the academic activities of students in Nigerian universities. This study, therefore, examined the influence of strike actions on the academic performance of undergraduate students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Public universities have become ineffective as a result of strike over the years. It has been observed that persistent ASUU strikes in Nigeria have disrupted students' normal learning process. Observation has also shown that instability in school calendar through strike hampers students' learning. It has also been observed that strikes could affect students' learning activities. The problem of this study sought to address how strike action influence students learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. However, most studies carried out on ASUU strike actions were focused on the influence of strike action on students' performance in universities. Not much has been done in terms of research on the influence of ASUU strike on students' learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Therefore, this study was deliberately centered on how to possibly close the gap in knowledge on the influence of ASUU strike on students' learning process.

### **Purpose for the Study**

The study examined the influence of academic staff union of universities (ASUU) strike on students' learning activities in Ambrose Alli University, campus. The study specifically determined the influence of ASUU strike on students' learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)**

Academic staff union as the name implies are professionals that handles the teaching, research programme of the higher institutions and also perform other academic services. The professional skills of academic staff also include: excellent interpersonal, oral and written communication skills; ability to conduct high quality research which is reflected in the authorship of high quality; publications, or other research outputs, in the areas of computer science; ability to manage time and work to strict deadlines and ability to teach and to supervise academic work by Undergraduates, Master and Doctoral students (Ogunode, et al., 2021).

The teaching role involves preparing and delivering of lectures, supervision of students in industrial training, final year project, post graduate students, marking assessments and grading of scripts. Other functions include development and promotion of innovative teaching methods, consultation with students and production of teaching materials for students. Research role involves carrying out investigations on identified problem(s), presentation of findings of such investigations in conferences/seminars and publishing the findings in journals and/or text books. The third role involves rendering services both to the school and the community at large. Such services include heading a department, faculty, committee, external supervisor, advisor of student societies, members of other recognized committees at departmental, faculty and university levels – example; sports, graduation, convocation, among others (Ogunode, et al., 2021; Uchenna, et al., 2018).

### **Concept of Strike Action**

Strike action, is an effort by employees to withhold work so that the employer will make greater concessions at the bargaining table. It is opined that it is a major bargaining weapon used by the labour union. It is varied from economic strike, where the employees stop work until the demand for better condition of employment is met, to sit-down strike, where employees strike but remain at work place. Strike is seen as collective organized, cessation or slowdown of work by employees, to force acceptance of their demands by the employer.

Edinyang and Ubi (2018) agreed that strike is the refusal to work as protest against inadequate and poor condition of service. International Labour Organisation (2016) posited that strike is the most visible and controversial form of collective action in the event of a labour dispute and is often seen as the last resort of workers' organizations in pursuit of their demands. Generally, ASUU uses strike as a means to force the government to respect the demands of the Union. Ogunode (2020) observed strike action is an endemic problem facing the administration of public universities in Nigeria. Nigerian public universities are known for continuous strike actions by different union groups within the system. The actions are frustrating the administration of public universities in Nigeria.

The reasons for the strike actions by union groups include; underfunding of the public universities, inadequate infrastructural facilities, and poor implementation of agreements reached with union groups, and poor working conditions. Continuous strike actions on the public universities include; disruption in the academic program, poor quality of education, bad image for the universities, poor ranking internationally, and poor patronage of public universities in Nigeria (Ogunode, et al., 2022).

### **Causes of Strike Actions in Public Universities**

There are many causes of strike actions in Nigerian public universities. In this paper, poor funding of public universities, by the Governments is a major reason for the strike actions in public universities (Ogunode, et al., 2021). The budgetary allocation for education in the country is inadequate and below 26% of UNESCO recommendations (Ogunode, et al., 2022; Ogunode & Ndayebom, 2022; Ogunode, et al., 2022).

Odim, et al. (2018) asserted that the United Nations in an attempt to improve education in Nigeria recommended that 26% of the Nation's budget should be channeled into the education sector. It has been noticed that the Government has never met such conditions, this further results in many universities being underfunded and having poor infrastructural supplies, poor payment of salaries, and poor maintenance of existing plants.

Ogunode, et al. (2021) and Ogunode, et al. (2022) also confirmed that poor funding of public universities is among the factors responsible for strike actions. Research approaches resulted in a wealth of evidence in supports of the notion of well-being as changing and changeable at the instance of individual and group. Happiness intervention studies, including meta-analyses, have firmly documented that happiness may change in individuals and populations through some identified effective factors such as the causes of strike action (World Happiness Report, 2022).

### **Influence of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Strike on Students Learning**

An academic institution disrupted with so many strikes cannot produce quality education. The time that is to be spent on learning and carrying out research, is spent in crisis and conflict, yet strikes take place more than once in every four years. Quoting the verdict of International Labour Organization (ILO), the Governor of Ekiti State, lamented that a sizeable number of graduates in Nigeria are half-baked and un-employable in a formal employment setting (Ige, 2018). This is a case of bad system producing a bad product. This however might continue to be the trend in Nigeria's higher education system as long as strikes continue to disrupt academic calendars and activities. Statistical reports have shown that majority of failures in Public University are recorded in examinations taken immediately after students return from a long break, and several undergraduates die in road accidents during the period of the strikes in an attempt to visit friends to vitiate boredom and idleness (Ogunode, et al., 2022).

Strike actions have great implication on academic research in technical education. Incessant strike actions have negative impacts on students and researchers on academic research. During this period, research students find it difficult to gain access to their supervisors and to even find students to administer research instruments to. This has a way of negatively affecting the volume of research works and thereby leading to a state of comatose in education research. Incessant strike actions may not be too healthy for the equipment and facilities used in the teaching and learning. It is a well-established fact that technical education is geared towards skill acquisition; and for one to be efficient and proficient in the field of technical education, there must be functional equipment and facilities on ground. Once there is strike action, the equipment and facilities are abandoned and are not maintained in line with the guidelines for maintaining equipment and facilities. Most of the equipment and facilities begin to wear out or depreciate. Some of these equipment and facilities need to be cleaned and oiled from time to time to avoid rusting or depreciation (Ogunode, et al., 2022).

In spite, of these negative consequences of strike action on students learning there are however a few studies which revealed little or no effects. One of these studies is a U.S.

administrative study which finds no sizeable average effects on student achievement up to five years after strikes, although strikes lasting ten or more days produced modest short-term declines in maths (EdWorking Papers, 2024). Another is the work done by Jacquemin, et al. (2019) on a multi-course, multi-institution study of prolonged faculty strikes which reported no detectable course level learning loss in first year-general education courses, suggesting that universities' catch-up strategies and curricular adjustments can mitigate measurable effects at the course level.

### Summary of Literature Reviewed

The strike actions to a great extent disrupted academic programs which exposed the students to disjointed learning and they encouraged poor study habit and affected students' learning. During strike actions, some students may engage themselves in unproductive activities such as sexual immorality, cyber scam, pool betting, playing video games, gossips, watching films and reading comic materials for entertainment purposes rather than reading the school notes. These may affect their academic performance. The indication of this is that students may lose the skill for preparedness and readiness to learn at the time of the strike. Hence their educational attainment or academic performance becomes adversely affected.

### Method of Study

The study employed the descriptive survey design to examine the influence of academic staff union of universities' strike on students' learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. This survey design was considered appropriate, because opinion of a large sample was sought for in their natural setting to draw inference. The study consisted of all the 4,987 undergraduates (Academic Planning Unit, 2021/2022 academic session). A sample of 350 students which represented 20% of the entire population was used for the study.

The questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. It was accorded content validation. The reliability of the questionnaire was carried out through split-half method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient was used to determine the co-efficient and .78 of 'r' value was obtained which was high enough for the study. A total of 250 copies of the questionnaire were dully filled and collected. They collated in tabular form for data analysis. A t-test statistical tool was used to test the stated hypothesis at .05 degree of confidence level.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** Does Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike have any influence on students' learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma?

**Table 1: Influence of ASUU Strike on Students' Learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma**

S/N	Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike and students learning	SA	A	D	SD
1	ASUU strike may affect students academic activities	21 (6%)	220 (62.9%)	9 (2.6%)	10(2.9%)
2	ASUU strike could hinder students quality learning	230 (65.7%)	19(5.4%)	2(0.6%)	9(2.6%)
3	ASUU strike may encourage poor study habit among students	2 (0.6%)	240 (68.6%)	10(2.9%)	8(2.3%)
4	ASUU strike can affect non-conducive environment for active learning	188(53.7%)	60(17.1%)	3(0.9%)	9(2.6%)
5	ASUU strike can affect effective learning process	5 (1.4%)	245(70%)	5(1.4%)	5(1.4%)
6	Incessant strike actions may increase to stress	42 (12%)	200 (57.1%)	11(3.1%)	7(2%)

	level on lecturers for quality teaching and learning.				
7	Incessant strike action may leads to poor quality education.	62 (17.7%)	188(53.7%)	7(2%)	3(0.9%)
8	Incessant strike may hinder motivation for academic research	197 (56.3%)	53 (15.1%)	3(0.9%)	7(2%)

Table above showed frequencies and percentages of responses on influence of ASUU strike on students learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. Result revealed that that respondents were of the opinion that ASUU strike may affect students academic activities (94.0%); ASUU strike could hinder students quality learning (87.4%); ASUU strike may encourage poor study habit among students (89.2%); ASUU strike can affect non-conducive environment for active learning (95.2%), ASUU strike can affect effective learning process (94.4%); incessant strike actions may increase to stress level on lecturers for quality teaching and learning (96.2%) and incessant strike may hinder motivation for academic research.

**Hypothesis 1:** Academic Staff Union of Universities’ strike has no significant influence on students’ learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

**Table 2: t-test Analysis on the Influence of ASUU Strike on Students’ Learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma**

Variable	N	M	SD	d	df	P
ASUU strike and students’ learning	260	22.34	3.1707	141.32	259	0.063

One sample t-test applied to find out if academic Staff Union of Universities’ strike has influence on students learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. As  $P < \alpha$  value of P (0.063) is higher than the level of significance  $\alpha .05$ , so our null hypothesis that Academic Staff Union of Universities’ strike has no significant influence on students learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma is rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that Academic Staff Union of Universities’ strike has a significant influence on students’ learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

### Discussion of Findings

The result from research question one showed that academic staff union of universities’ strike had significant influence on students’ learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. This finding agreed with the study of Odubela (2017) who stated that an effective learning of students is achieved by successful covering of the course outline timely and before the examination. This was rarely achieved with strike action in place. This is true because disruption in academic program caused by strike action breeds disappointment, frustration, emotional and psychological trauma, unpreparedness on the part of the students and lack of motivation, which sum up to non-conducive environment for effective learning in Nigerian universities; a situation that dampened human development.

However, several empirical studies revealed smaller, mixed or no sizeable average negative effects of teacher /faculty strikes on student learning which disagreed with the findings of this study. One of these studies is a U.S. administrative study which finds no sizeable average effects on student achievement up to five years after strikes, although strikes lasting ten or more days produced modest short-term declines in maths (EdWorking Papers, 2024)

Also, findings from this study is in contrast with the work done by Jacquemin, et al. (2019) on a multi-course, multi-institution study of prolonged faculty strikes which reported no detectable

course level learning loss in first year-general education courses, suggesting that universities' catch-up strategies and curricular adjustments can mitigate measurable effects at the course level.

Some of the plausible reasons for these errors include the following; Outcome measurement differences, Strike length and intensity, Sampling and Selection bias, Institutional mitigation and timing of measurement etc.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that ASUU strike has a significant influence on students learning in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The study confirmed that strike action destabilized calendar of universities education in Nigeria. The disruption affects the followings, curriculum implementation, quality of lesson delivery, period of graduation, hampered students' performance and quality of education in the country.

As a result of this, graduates have not always been adequately prepared to face the challenges of labour market and this would increase the rate of graduate youth unemployment in the country. In addition, the pass glory and enviable standard of Nigeria universities locally and globally would be lost. Strike makes planning for universities' academic and non-academic activities to be very difficult. Educational managers face the challenge of re-planning educational activities, re-preparing the school calendar, reassigning old task to new staff and not achieving certain long term goals due to the prolonged un-accomplishment as a result of the strike.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should ensure that all agreements signed and reached with the Academic Staff Union of Universities in public universities were implemented as agreed.
2. The Academic Staff Union members in public Universities should adopt Productive Dialogue in resolving matters of conflict rather than employing strike action.

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